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To: Steamship Authority Board
CC: Steamship authority Port Council

Ref: General Manager Six-Month Self-Evaluation

Introduction

It is hard to believe that six months have already passed since I assumed the role of General Manager. I came into this position with a clear sense of the Authority's mission, to provide safe, reliable, and essential transportation to the Islands, and with a commitment to lead with transparency, humility, and a willingness to listen before acting. This evaluation reflects candidly on where I have made meaningful progress, where I have fallen short of my own expectations, and how I intend to close the gap between the ambition of my original Work Plan and the realities of the job as I have come to understand it more fully over these first six months.

Progress on the GM Work Plan

When I presented my General Manager Work Plan, I laid out an ambitious set of priorities: governance and oversight clarity, financial controls and planning, strategic planning and operational alignment, and improving transparency and public trust. I want to be direct with the Board: the pace of execution across these workstreams has been slower than I projected. Solid strides have been made on all of them, but significant work remains. Increasing transparency and building public trust have been consistent focal points, and while meaningful gains have been made, this is, and will always be, a work in progress. One-on-one meetings with senior staff have been conducted, and the development of an enhanced organizational chart and decision matrix is continuing to take shape as we identify evolving needs and the best ways to meet them. Some of the slower pace is attributable to the complexity of managing relationships across customers, community stakeholders, the Board, the Port Council, new Board committees, and operational staff. Some of it reflects my own learning curve in calibrating how much can realistically move in parallel within a public authority structure, where consensus-building, procurement timelines, and statutory requirements necessarily take longer than they might in the private sector.

I do not offer these observations as excuses. I take responsibility for a Work Plan timeline that, in retrospect, underestimated the institutional and procedural realities of this organization. What I can say with confidence is that the underlying work has not stalled; it has simply taken a different shape than originally anticipated, often because more urgent and unanticipated priorities required attention. I believe the Work Plan itself remains the right roadmap. What needs adjustment is the pacing, and I intend to bring a revised, more realistic timeline to the Board following this evaluation.

Community, Employee, and Stakeholder Engagement

Where I believe I have exceeded my own initial expectations is in the depth and breadth of outreach to the people who depend on, work for, and oversee this Authority, and, critically, to those who directly or indirectly support it as community stakeholders. I made a deliberate choice early on to prioritize relationship-building and transparency, even when it meant some operational and planning work moved more slowly as a result. I stand behind that choice.

On the community side, I hosted my first Community Meeting at the Woods Hole Community Hall, focused squarely on the relationship between the Authority and our largest host community in Falmouth. I have engaged directly and repeatedly with stakeholders across each of our Cape and Island communities, including Select Boards, the Martha's Vineyard Commission's Island Supply Chain Study, the Falmouth Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee, and the Falmouth Traffic Advisory Committee, as well as with individual residents, on difficult and sometimes contentious topics: the 5:30 a.m. sailing, the Blue Line and reservations, terminal staging and traffic congestion, rideshare impacts, new service routes, and the visual and environmental footprint of the new terminal. I have not always had answers that satisfied every constituency, and I do not expect that I will. But I have tried, consistently, to show up, to listen honestly, to be candid about trade-offs, and to treat critics as partners in problem-solving rather than obstacles to be managed. I believe that approach is beginning to build the kind of trust this Authority has lacked in recent years, even where specific disagreements remain unresolved.

On the employee side, I initiated a series of employee appreciation events across our terminals and maintenance facilities, including Woods Hole, Hyannis, Fairhaven, and more recently Vineyard Haven, with Nantucket, Falmouth, and Mashpee still to come. These events were intentionally informal: an opportunity for me to sit down, share a meal, and hear directly from the people who keep the Authority running every day. They have also proven to be a meaningful opportunity for staff from different departments to come together, build relationships, and remind each other that we are all part of the same mission. I have also made it a priority to address service culture directly and personally when issues arise, including a recent, candid message to staff about a customer service failure that did not reflect who we want to be. I would rather name those moments honestly and ask more of our team than allow them to pass without acknowledgment.

On the federal and state stakeholder side, Board Chair Peter Jeffrey and I traveled to Washington, D.C. to meet with a number of legislative offices and the Department of Transportation, which was a valuable opportunity to introduce ourselves, express our appreciation for their continued support, and discuss the Authority's direction. I have worked closely with our federal and state advocates to begin providing the Board with regular legislative briefings going forward. I have also been actively engaged in federal ferry funding advocacy in support of legislation that increases funding to public ferry operators, work that will strengthen the long-term funding interests of this Authority and of public ferry systems more broadly. In conjunction with the Capital Planning Committee, I will be developing a slate of projects for the Authority that will require federal and state support, including new vessels and port infrastructure. The relationships we are building now will help guide us in securing the assistance these projects will require.

On the service expansion front, I have been working with staff and Port Council Chair Gordon Carr to reevaluate the viability of service from New Bedford to the Islands. We expect to reach a license agreement for service from New Bedford to Nantucket in the near term and look forward to working with the Capital Planning Committee on developing a broader plan for Martha's Vineyard service from New Bedford as well.

On the governance side, working with Peter Jeffrey, we have established the Capital Planning Committee and the Governance Committee, each composed of two Board members and three Port Council members. These committees, like the existing IT Steering Committee, are designed to help develop, inform, and guide the future of the Authority. The Capital Planning Committee's initial focus is on reviewing recent projects and building a strategic blueprint for what the Steamship Authority should look like by 2050. The Governance Committee will ensure that the Board, Port Council, and Authority meet the requirements of the Enabling Act, and will guide the development and implementation of organizational and customer-facing policies and procedures. I look forward to both committees being fully launched in the coming weeks.

At the organizational level, I have met individually with all senior staff and continue to engage with them and as many employees as possible across all of our locations, speaking with terminal staff and vessel crews, listening to their challenges and the opportunities they see. These conversations have provided essential context about where we are succeeding, where we need more effort, and where additional support is required. Training remains an area that demands sustained focus. To that end, we are developing a job description for a Training Manager who will oversee ongoing vessel crew training, front-line customer service training, and support the implementation of training for our new reservation system. This position will be presented for Board consideration in July. We are also preparing to add a Project Manager to plan and oversee the Authority's growing portfolio of concurrent initiatives. These represent only the first stage of the organizational changes needed to position the Authority for sustained success. I have been deliberate about moving thoughtfully rather than quickly, recognizing that I first needed to understand where our organizational strengths lie and where meaningful gaps exist. I have been encouraged by the depth of commitment and energy I have found across the Authority, from front-line staff to senior leadership, in working toward a stronger future.

Where I Am Holding Myself Accountable

I want to be specific about where I believe I need to improve. First, I need to be more disciplined about sequencing. When community and stakeholder engagement has competed for time with Work Plan execution, I have tended to prioritize the former. While I believe that was often the right call in the moment, I need to build a structure, including delegating more deliberately to my senior team, so that both can advance without one consistently coming at the expense of the other. Second, I need to communicate more proactively with the Board when timelines shift, rather than surfacing that information primarily in the context of a formal evaluation. Third, several operational issues this period, including a customer service incident that drew public attention, have reminded me that culture change requires sustained reinforcement, not a single communication. I am committed to following through with more consistent visibility into front-line service standards and expectations going forward.

Compensation

I want to address my compensation directly as part of this evaluation. I came into this role at a starting salary of $225,000. My predecessor, who served as General Manager with the same title and full scope of responsibility, was compensated at $239,400, a rate he continues to receive in his current role as Senior Advisor, prior to any annual adjustment. I want to be clear that I appreciate the Senior Advisor role and recognize the commitment and value he has provided to the Authority throughout his career and in his current capacity.

I raise this not as a complaint, but as a straightforward and material point of comparison. The individual receiving compensation meaningfully higher than mine is no longer carrying the full operational, governance, financial, and public accountability responsibilities of the General Manager position. I am. Over these first six months, I believe I have demonstrated the knowledge, judgment, and commitment this role demands, through the depth of community and stakeholder engagement described above, through active involvement in federal and state legislative advocacy, through direct management of sensitive personnel and operational matters, and through a willingness to take honest ownership of areas where progress has been slower than planned.

Given that my predecessor's full-time GM compensation exceeds my current salary, and that I am now performing the full scope of that role while he is not, I believe it is appropriate for the Board to consider adjusting my salary to at least parity with his former General Manager compensation. I would further ask the Board to consider whether an adjustment beyond parity is warranted in recognition of the scope of responsibility I now carry. I welcome the opportunity to discuss this directly with the Board and Port Council as part of this review.

Looking Ahead

As I move into the second half of my first year, my priorities are clear: to bring a revised and realistic Work Plan timeline to the Board and actively advance the development of the Authority's Steamship 2050 plan; to make tangible progress on the new reservation system implementation and the launch of our new committees; to sustain the cadence of community and employee engagement that I believe is foundational to this Authority's long-term health; and to ensure that the trust we are building externally is matched by consistent execution and accountability internally.

More specifically, from the GM Work Plan, the areas requiring most direct attention in the coming months are as follows.

1) Governance, Oversight, and Role Clarity. I will work to ensure that the organization is properly structured, with personnel assigned where they are most effective, and that new roles are added where they will meaningfully improve organizational results. In partnership with the Board and Port Council, we will further develop the decision matrix to ensure that leadership is well informed and that decisions are not made in isolation. Establishing a reporting template and a cadence of regular strategic reviews will help ensure accountability and forward momentum.

2) Financial Controls, Planning, and Transparency. Working closely with our Controller, we are already making progress toward establishing clear financial controls, approval processes, and spending thresholds, and holding departments accountable to their financial expectations. Going forward, we will develop a financial forecast model projecting at least two years out, so that we can anticipate our capital needs and plan for the costs required to meet them. This will require long-term planning for operating budgets as well as projections of future labor agreement costs.

3) Strategic Planning and Operational Alignment. The Steamship 2050 capital plan will be a central tool in guiding the Authority's efforts to meet the Massachusetts Clean Energy and Climate Plan 2050 and to address the future transportation needs of passengers and freight, with careful consideration given to where our workforce lives. This work encompasses not only fleet replacement but also continued workforce development and operational optimization.

4) Committee Development and Integration. We have established the Governance and Capital Planning Committees, and the IT Steering Committee continues its important work. I intend for all three committees to be central to our long-term planning, and I will look to leverage them collectively in developing the Steamship 2050 plan. Going forward, I expect each committee to carry annual goals that align with and support the goals of the General Manager and the Authority as a whole.

5) Transparency and Public Trust. I will continue to engage consistently with our customers, our staff, and our community stakeholders. I am committed to leading a transparent organization and to using the relationships we are building across each of these groups to help inform the decisions we make going forward. We plan to expand our community meeting program to our other port communities and to hold those forums on a regular basis.

Taken together, these priorities reflect where I believe the Authority needs to focus to build on the foundation established over the past six months and move with greater purpose and discipline in the months ahead.

I remain genuinely energized by this work and by the responsibility the Board has entrusted to me. I am grateful for the patience and partnership of the Board and Port Council as I continue to grow into this role, and I welcome their candid feedback as part of this review process.

Respectfully submitted,

Alex Kryska
General Manager